

often used as excuses for maintaining an authoritarian-style regime.

Democracy precludes neither economic success nor social stability. In fact, the rapid economic development of many Asian countries has brought new social problems and pressures that perhaps only a more democratic political system can relieve. Take, for example, Taiwan. As income levels rose, individuals gained a new sense of control over their own and their children's futures. Many traveled to the West and sent their children to study in Western universities, where they learned of the plethora of opportunities—professional, social, and personal—that democratic societies offer their citizens. They returned with new ideas and new expectations of and for their own government. The authoritarian style of leadership that characterized the government under Chaing Kai-shek proved unable to meet the needs of the rising middle class in Taiwan and the government was forced to evolve. Taiwan's current president, Lee Teng-hui, deserves much credit for managing and even fostering the change. Perhaps as a just reward, Lee won a popular reelected bid last March and became the first democratically-elected Chinese leader in history.

Mr. President, the political and social system on Taiwan is far from perfect, something the leadership there readily admits. But Taiwan has managed an astounding economic and political transformation in a relatively short period of time, with little violence or social upheaval. I believe that Taiwan serves as a sharp rebuttal to those who say that traditional Asian values will not permit the growth of a healthy democracy. Other Asian states, including Japan and South Korea, have found democracy to be consistent with economic development. Now even Mongolia has chosen democracy as its path to a brighter future.

Other Asian nations could benefit from following a Taiwan model of political reform. I find it unlikely that a country that is experiencing the rapid economic growth, technological development and social change that China is experiencing can long restrain the inevitable pressure for political changes as well. The military leaders in Burma have only hindered their country's economic development by forcibly resisting the results of democratic elections there.

Indonesia, in particular, has reached a critical point in its economic and social development. There are clear signs that the developing middle class is restless and chaffing within the current restrictive political system. President Soeharto, who has done so many good things for his country's development already, could cement his legacy as a great leader by taking steps toward a more responsive and participatory political system. Such steps would serve to enhance his government's standing in the country and in the world, not diminish it.

Mr. President, the U.S. cannot and should not ignore important cultural and historical differences between our own country and countries in Asia. There is much in Asian society that we in this country can learn from and we should be open to doing so. But Asian individuals are no less deserving of a responsive government and freedom of choice than their Western counterparts and cultural differences should not be used as a mask to conceal and support authoritarian regimes. It is very much in the U.S. interest to promote and support the trend toward democracy in Asia, as we have done for several decades.

We do not know what changes the 21st century will bring to our world. But we can hope and expect that our descendants will enjoy greater peace and prosperity if our nation trades and cooperates with a democratized Asia. Individual freedom and choice are not exclusively Western values and promoting them around the world is not Western imperialism. The growth of democracy has brought great benefits to nations that adopted it and Asian nations deserve these benefits as well. The trend toward democracy is already there; we should do all we can to foster and encourage it.

#### THE SAVINGS IN CONSTRUCTION ACT OF 1996

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, during my time in the Senate, I have worked to see that United States joins the rest of the world by converting to the metric system of measurement. Believe it or not, the United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that has failed to change to the metric system of measurement.

I believe the Federal Government, as a major consumer of goods and services, should lead the way and convert to the metric system. In 1973, I authored the Metric Conversion Act that later became law in 1975. That act set forth the policy of the United States to convert to the metric system. Section 3 of the Act requires each Federal Agency to use the metric system of measurement in its procurement, grants and other business-related activities.

Slowly but surely, the Federal Government has started to make that move. Federal construction officials in particular have made great progress in this area and have met with limited resistance from the construction community around the United States. All concerned deserve our praise for their efforts.

Unfortunately, legislation introduced in both the House and the Senate during this Congress would have provided permanent, complete exemptions for two industries from requests for the metric-sized building products required by Federal law for Federal construction projects.

Needless to say, I strongly opposed that legislation. Federal laws and Presidential Executive orders signed by

Presidents of both parties over for 20 years clearly state that the United States should move to the metric system and that the Federal Government should lead the way—by example.

Over the last several weeks, I have joined with Senators HOLLINGS, GLENN, and BURNS to craft an acceptable amendment to the original legislation. I am not completely pleased with the result of our efforts and it is certainly not what I would have written. The result is, however, a compromise. I believe compromise to be integral to the working of the U.S. Senate and did, therefore, not oppose this substitute.

#### THANKS TO STAFF OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. JOHNSTON. Mr. President, when I first came to the Senate, I was assigned to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, which we of course know today as the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. As I prepare to finish my Senate career, I look back on my years on that committee as the source of the most rewarding and intellectually stimulating challenges of my years here. From the Arab embargo of 1973 to the natural gas wars of 1978, from the complex Alaska land issues of the early 1980's to the National Energy Policy Act of 1992, we have been engaged in vitally important work that is often long on complexity and short on glamour.

I am proud of the record we achieved, not only during my 8 years as chairman, but throughout my service, and I wish today to say thank you to a professional staff unlike any other, one which has served the committee and the country so well over the years.

Some of the best minds in the country have served on the committee staff over the years.

Whatever their reasons for coming, I believe most stayed and relished their time there because they found themselves in the company of other keen minds, and they knew that their mission would not be mortgaged to politics and that their task was to find honest, pragmatic, workable solutions to vexing problems. Almost all of them have gone on to rewarding careers in government and business, and I can only hope they were as enriched by their experience as the public product was by their service.

Luckily for me, some of the very best and brightest have remained to assist me as my service in this body comes to a close.

One of those staff members who has served me the longest and with particular distinction is the minority staff director of the committee, Dr. Ben Cooper. About the time I joined the committee, we became involved in the development of national energy policy in response to the crude oil supply interruptions in the Middle East that were disrupting our domestic economy. The committee has continued to be involved deeply in this issue, as indicated